Clatsop County Historical Society Quarterly

CUMTUX

Vol. 43, No. 2 — Spring 2023

Image courtesy of the editor.

Margie Thompson, several years ago at a Finnish Brotherhood Picnic at Cullaby Lake. While not Finnish, she was an active member of the organization and brightened all our meetings. Margie was married to Dick Thompson and both were related to a number of people whose stories have been in *Cumtux*. Dick was a man of strong opinions and didn't always believe that we should address some of the darker aspects of our history. I ran into him at the library one day where he was reading a *Cumtux* and he told me he was rejoining CCHS because he had found two stories in that issue about his wife's relatives and he didn't want to miss out.

In This Issue ...

The Lewis & Clark School district hired me to take control of the 8th Grade girls gym class about forty years ago. They must have been desperate because no one else would have hired me for such a job. All I'd ever done was get an MA degree and worked as a waitress. I had no talent for bossing anyone. The kids were always challenging me especially during recess when I also had boys to deal with. About every five minutes a fight would break out and I finally learned to keep my eye on the smallest boy who was the one who started them. I was fortunate I never had to do a flying tackle as I saw one teacher do. But I understand the frustration that the teachers and the students had. Some of their stunts were funny.

That is why Max Bigby is so amazing. He was able to harness the energy of the students to produce something remarkable by working together. Their story is the first in this issue. Barbara Freeman further explains why Max Bigby's approach to physical education worked.

As a contrast, Dave Tennant revisits old memories of freedom and friendship and Mal Van Meer sent us his story about "Stuck in the Mud."

—The Editor

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Front Cover: Image courtesy of Max Bigby
Lewis and Clark Youth Circus Bicycle Built for Seven. ca. 1975

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know...to inform"

The Lewis & Clark School Circus of the 1970s

by Max Bigby

In the summer of 1969, my wife and I had completed our Master's Degrees at the University of Oregon and moved home to Astoria. Chet Hogan, Superintendent of Lewis and Clark District #5, hired me to teach Physical Education at the first through eighth grade (soon to be K–8) school. He gave me the opportunity to enrich the physical education curriculum.

One evening, after teaching and coaching, my wife mentioned to me that the Clackamas High School Circus was coming to Astoria and performing at the Astoria High School Gymnasium. Much to my delight, we found a fantastic circus performance. I saw the excitement in the faces of the performers and the audience as they all enjoyed the creative experience being shown.

After the performance, I introduced myself to the Clackamas High School Circus Teacher/Coach. His name was Dave Williams. During that same school year, numerous trips were made to Clackamas High School with my Lewis and Clark students and parents to watch and learn from the circus students.

Reams of pictures were taken of both the equipment and the circus acts. Scale drawings were made of the equipment. The following year, materials were purchased and donated. Most of our circus equipment was fabricated by people in our community. Shackles, steel cables, ropes, and pulleys were purchased from Englund Marine. Custodians at Lewis and Clark installed anchors in the floor and ceiling to safely handle the equipment.

Supportive parents helped transport our L & C students to Clackamas for Monday evening practice. Our students were determining if they wanted to do this as they watched and learned from the Clackamas students. Very few decided not to be part of this new program. I had the full spectrum of students to include. Our L & C circus gave at-risk students a reason to come to school and integrate with the rest of the student population. All seventh and eighth-grade students were eligible to be in this program. All this happened before Title IX, which continues to be a work in progress for girls and women in sports.

The location of the Lewis and Clark School shared boundaries with the following school districts: Astoria, Warrenton, and Seaside. As a result, students from each district could elect to attend Lewis and Clark, and Lewis and Clark students could elect to attend the other districts. Because of the particular uniqueness of the school location, special grants were made available to teachers and programs. I applied for an ESEA [Elementary & Secondary Education Act] Title III teacher incentive grant of $1,000. I was awarded this grant to build a balance and shoot-through-ladder, more ceiling rigging, and both video and audible tapes. L & C had the first video machine in the county. It took a large, three-tiered cart to roll the apparatus in and out of the gym. I was able to tape all of our performances on this machine! Later, these tapes were made into VHS, and then Neal Cummings, owner of Video Horizons, made the VHS into DVDs.

Using a bit of the grant money and the charity and goodness in his heart, Wilt Paulson, owner of Lektro, built the balance and shoot-through ladder for our circus. Wilt helped transport the sixteen-foot ladder and all our equipment to all venues. Wilt Paulson and his wife, Violet Paulson, ensured this all could succeed. Eric and Teri Paulson, their son and daughter, were

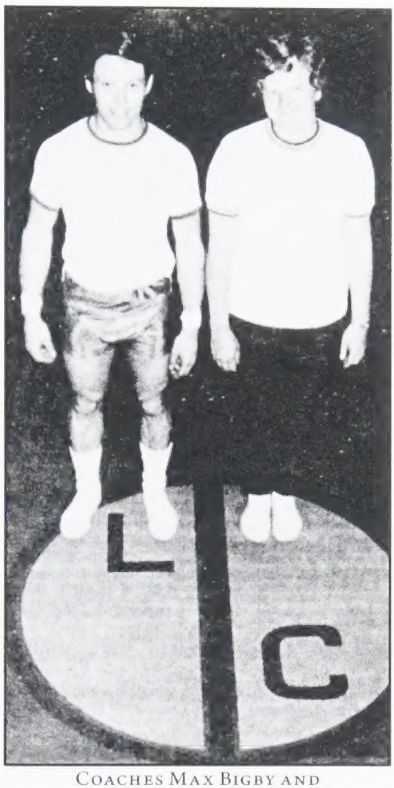


Image courtesy of Max Bigby

Coaches Max Bigby and Vie Carruth. ca. 1971

in the circus and created so many memories there.

We were fortunate to tap into the Clatsop Community College welding and machine shop, instructed by Hank Norling. With detailed drawings of the Clackamas equipment, Hank had perfect projects for his students to create and weld. I needed to supply the necessary steel, aluminum, and bearings to assemble the equipment.

With our equipment ready and used for our practices in the L & C gymnasium, we were set to perform.

and again "Veddie" dribbles down the floor, bowling his opponents right and left, and then, to crown his success, he jumps up on "Ki" Hildebrand's shoulders and drops the ball into the basket. In the High School game Fred enjoyed the limelight for a brief period when he smashed Max Hurlbutt to the floor with a solid solar plexus to the eyebrow.

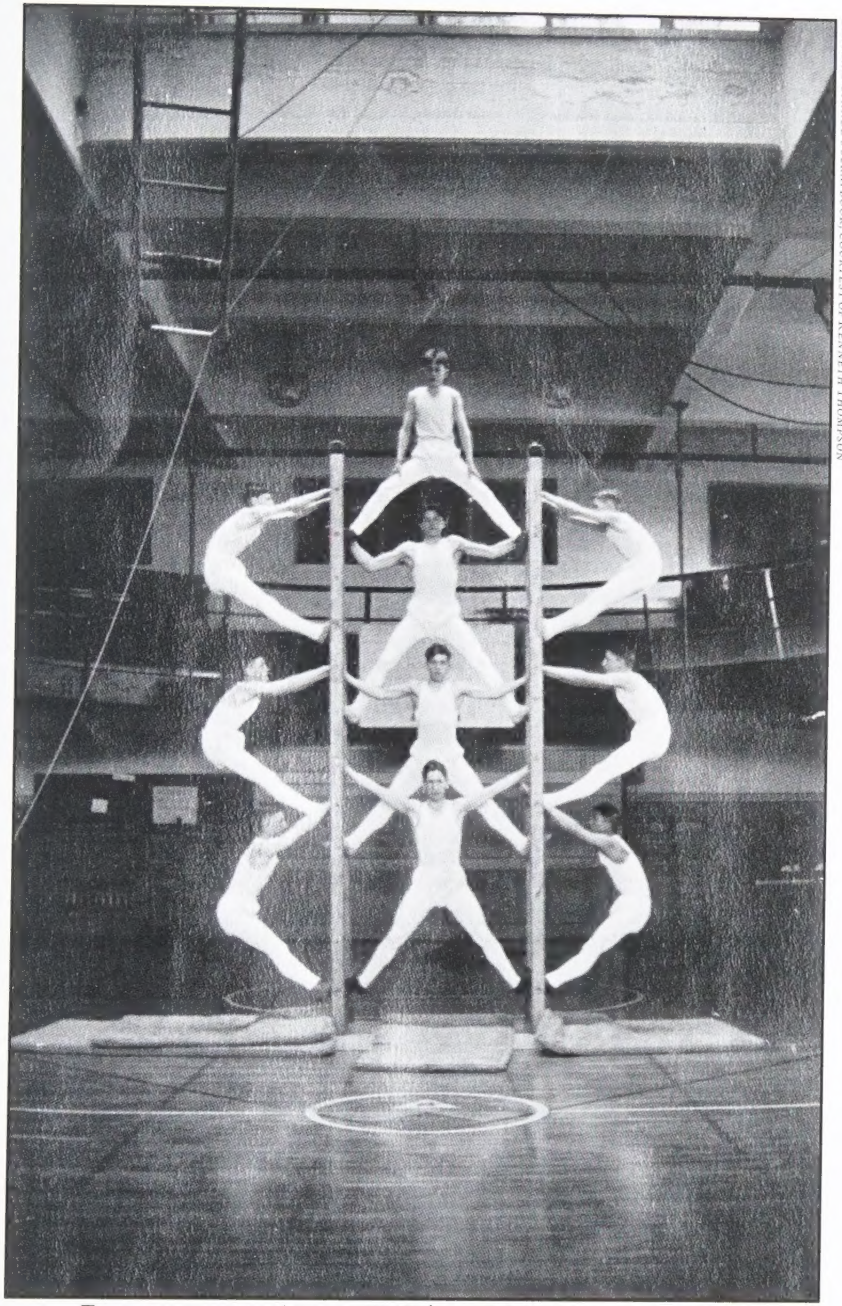
The center position on this mythical all-star aggregation is occupied by Arthur Hildebrand, better known by his many admirers as "Jazz," "Shorty" or "Ki." Of all the boys who ever donned the jersey and suction-soles, "Ki" stands the highest. There is little comment to make on the wonderful playing of "Jazz." He has been the backbone of any team on which he has ever played, and only once has he lost his temper. That was in the memorable game against the Insane Asylum, when "Shorty" dashed against a kleptomaniac named Heeza Thief, and knocked him cold. A chorus of angry shouts came from the lunatics-gallery. One shouted to "Ki," "We'll get you up here to take Heeza's place."

Captain "Rat" Wertheimer held down the left guard position throughout last season. Weighing two hundred pounds in his stocking feet, "Rat" was a terror on the defense. Time and again he leapt fifteen feet into the air and caught the ball as it was speeding with its message of victory toward the enemy's basket. "Rat's" squirrel-like antics were frequently received with showers of nuts from the audience. Ralph is a fighter from whistle to whistle. He is continually disputing the referee's decisions. On one occasion the "ref" became so angry that he struck at "Wer." "Rat" gently lifted him in his arms and carried him to the showers where he might cool off. Because of his wonderful headwork, Wertheimer was the unanimous choice for captain of this wonderful, well-balanced team.

Last, and also least, we have Cecil Matson. "Cec" was the surprise of the season. Coming into High School only last February, he immediately donned a basketball suit, and in less than five minutes, by his spectacular playing, he had the right guard position cinched. Can anyone imagine a guard holding Einar Carlson down to one basket? Well, this is exactly what Cecil did, and in one game he made a reputation which will forever live in the hearts of the Freshmen.

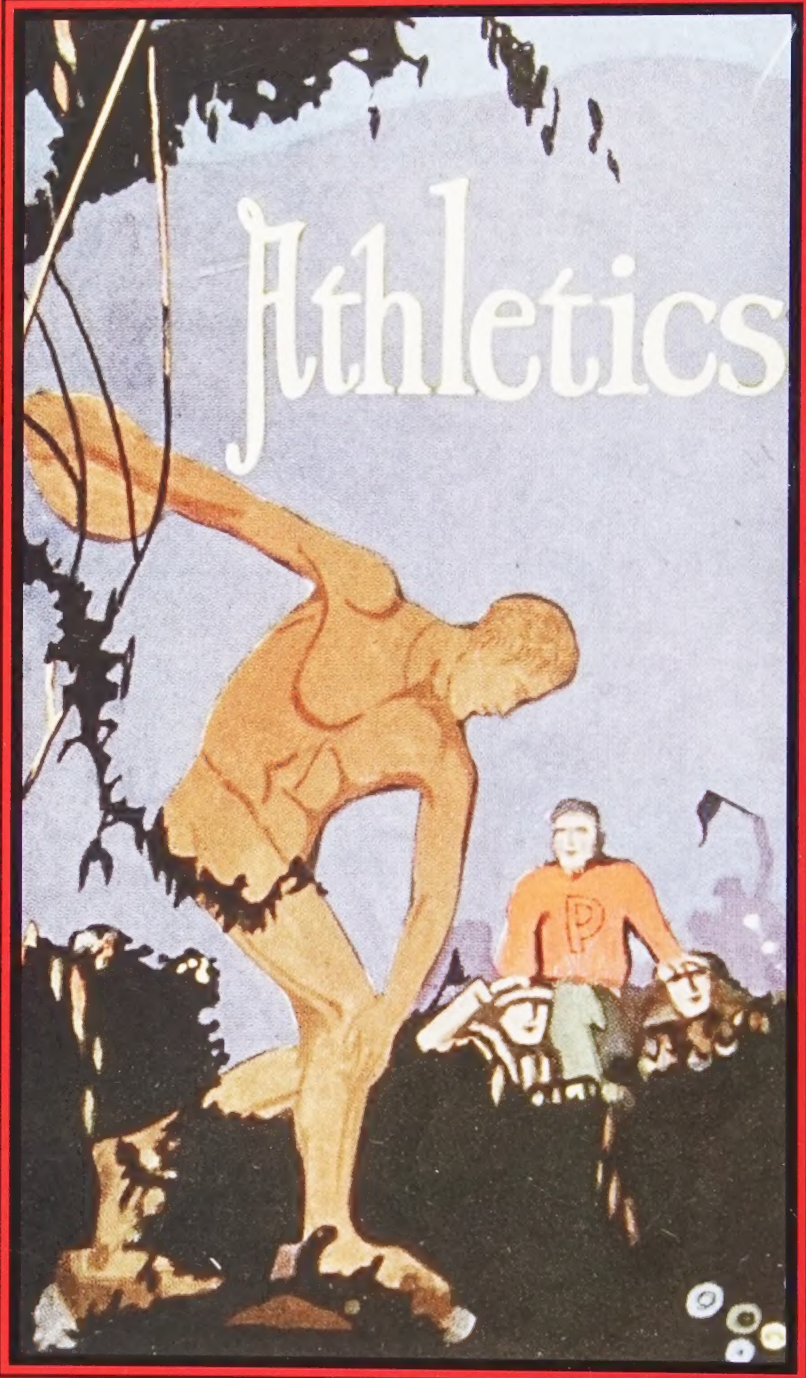
Beyond doubt, this is the most perfectly balanced team that ever trotted on the maple. With Duncan dropping them in from every angle, Voss dashing madly down the sidelines, "Ki" shooting one in from the middle of the floor, "Rat" knocking the tar out of Mel Anderson, and Cecil smothering Einar Carlson in his long arms—what chance has any opposing team?

— John Garner



Leonard Spande's scrapbook, courtesy of Kenneth Thompson

Ten boys from the Astoria YMCA's intermediate class perform "Difficult and Daring Unique Pyramids on the roman Ladders" during a demonstration held in Astoria High School's Patriot Hall. ca. 1921



Page from the Union High School 1925 annual, the *Wickiup*